

Thomas Jefferson to Robert Smith, September 3, 1807, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY J. MSS. (ROBERT SMITH.)

Monticello, September 3.

Dear Sir, —Your letters of Aug. 23, 27, 29, 30, have all been received; the two last came yesterday. I observe that the merchants of New York & Philadelphia think that notice of our present crisis with England should be sent to the Streights of Sunda by a public ship, but that such a vessel going to Calcutta, or into the Bay of Bengal, would give injurious alarm; while those of Baltimore think such a vessel going to the Streights of Sunda would have the same effect. Your proposition, very happily in my opinion, avoids the objections of all parties; will do what some think useful & none think injurious. I therefore approve of it. To wit, that by some of the private vessels now going, instructions from the department of State be sent to our Consul at the Isle of France, to take proper measures to advise all our returning vessels, as far as he can, to be on their guard against the English, and that we now appoint & send a Consul to Batavia, to give the same notice to our vessels returning through the Streights of Sunda. For this purpose I sign a blank sheet of paper, over which signature the Secretary of State will have a consular commission written, leaving a blank for the name to be filled up by yourself with the name of such discreet & proper person as shall be willing to go. If he does not mean to reside there as Consul, we must bear his expenses out & in, & compensate his time. I presume you will receive this commission, & the papers you sent me through the Secretary of State, on the 8th.

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I approve of the orders you gave for intercepting the pirates, & that they were given as the occasion required, without waiting to consult me, which would have defeated the object.

I am very glad indeed that the piratical vessel and some of the crew have been taken, & hope the whole will be taken; & that this has been done by the militia. It will contribute to show the expediency of an organized naval militia.

I send you the extract of a letter I lately wrote to Genl Dearborne on the defence of the *Chesapeake*. Your situation will better enable you to make inquiries into the practicability of the plan than he can. If practicable, it is all-important.

I do not see the probability of receiving from Gr. Britain reparation for the wrong committed on the *Chesapeake*, and future security for our seamen, in the same favorable light with Mr. Gallatin & yourself. If indeed the consequence of the battle of Friedland can be to exclude her from the Baltic, she may temporize with us. But if peace among the *continental* powers of Europe should leave her free in her intercourse with the powers who will then be *neutral*, the present ministry, perhaps no ministry which can now be formed, will not in my opinion give us the necessary assurance respecting our flag. In that case, it must bring on a war soon, and if so, it can never be in a better time for us. I look to this, therefore, as most probably now to take place, altho I do most sincerely wish that a just & sufficient security may be given us, & such an interruption of our prosperity avoided. I salute you with affection and respect.